

VACATION RENTAL INSPECTIONS

OBJECTIVE

The primary objective is to provide the guests of vacation rental homes with a measure of protection based on the provisions of the Life Safety Code, but just as important, good common sense on the part of the owner in providing a safe environment for his or her guests. For the most part, the vacation rental homes are single family dwellings where there are common established health and safety standards that provide for a relatively safe living situation. Below are some basic standards that will be reviewed during the vacation rental home inspection.

Smoke Detection – The most important standard for the protection of the public, so as to provide early notification to the tenants in the event of a fire and for their quick exit from the building during this critical time frame. Detectors should be located on every level of the dwelling, including the basement, inside every bedroom, in exit hallways and passages to the exterior of the building, in high hazard areas such as boiler rooms, laundry rooms, and attached garages. They should be loud enough to wake sleeping persons.

Fire Extinguisher – A fire extinguisher should be mounted and visible to tenants and inspected on a yearly basis.

Utilities – Good common sense and maintenance of utilities goes a long way towards a safe environment.

- ✓ **Electrical Service** – A sound electrical service is essential to prevent shock and fire situations. The homeowner should have an electrician check and make any necessary upgrades to the system prior to renting the unit. Maintaining a good relationship with the technician is crucial in the event of an emergency.
 - Testing of receptacles to ensure proper grounding and service will be performed with a handheld tester.
 - An inspection of the electrical panel box will be conducted to ensure appropriate amperage fusing. All panels must be clearly marked.
 - Inspections will be done to ensure that ground fault circuit interrupter receptacles are located in the appropriate areas. Those areas include in bathrooms, in kitchens, in garage and basement areas and on the exterior of the building.
 - The unnecessary use of extension cords will be eliminated.

- All wiring must be secured with staples or running boards.
- All questionable BX metal sheathed electrical cable will be eliminated.

Egress – In addition to smoke detection, proper exiting from the building is critical to escape. Means of egress include all components in the normal path of travel to the outside of the building. There should be no unusual obstructions in the exit route to the outside of the building.

- ✓ Inspections will be done to ensure that the ceiling height in any room of occupancy is 7'-6" for at least two thirds of the rooms' size.
- ✓ Doors should have a clear width of 32" to facilitate egress. Older buildings should be no less than 28" subject to the authority having jurisdiction. Doors shall swing freely with no sticking.
- ✓ Floors should be level with minimum changes in elevation.
- ✓ Corridors should be 36" with minimum projections entering the space, including furniture and decorations so as to not slow down persons exiting from the building.
- ✓ Stairs should be uniform in tread space and riser height. Generally, an 11" tread and 7" risers, with 44" of width in newer construction is required. Existing stairs can be used subject to the approval by the Authority having jurisdiction.
- ✓ Locks on the doors in the egress passages should be easily unlocked without any undue hardship or tools.
- ✓ One and Two family dwellings must have a primary and secondary means of egress. The primary means is generally a door leading into the building with egress windows serving the secondary means of egress from bedrooms. Windows should open easily without undue effort. Third floor bedrooms will require additional fire escape stairs.
- ✓ No basement living spaces will be allowed without special exiting in place. Consult the Fire Department if there are questions.
- ✓ Attached garages must be separated from the dwelling unit or completely enclosed with fire grade sheetrock and a fire door leading into the structure. Primary egress through a garage is not appropriate.

Heat Sources -All heating units should be tagged with a minimum annual service test and cleaning conducted by a licensed technician.

- ✓ **Oil fired units** – All oil fired units will be inspected based on NFPA 31.
 - Oil units must have primary and secondary safety controls where appropriate.

- A red emergency shut off switch must be located outside the area of the unit for the tenant to shut off the appliance.
- A technician shut off switch must be located at the burner for servicing the unit.
- A thermal coupling switch must be located over the heating unit.
- A low water cutoff must be located on the water based unit.
- A flame detection and oil shut off control must be located at the burner.
- The chimney connector must be sound and properly connected to the chimney to prevent flue gases from entering the structure.
- All Power Venter's must be installed to the product listing.
- Ensure that the unit is placed on non-combustible flooring as required.
- The oil line must be protected from injury by non-metallic sheathing. No buried unprotected oil lines will be allowed.
- There must be a shut off valve at the tank and beyond the filter for routing servicing for the filter.
- The oil tank must be properly supported on cement flooring or a pad with the tank legs no more than 12" off the floor with flanged supports on each leg base.
- The tank must be liquid tight.
- All fill and vent tank connectors must be properly sized.

✓ **Propane Heaters** – Installation is required by a licensed propane technician. All propane heaters will be inspected based on NFPA 54.

- An annual service inspection is required by a qualified technician and the service tag must be attached to the unit.
- The tank must be properly supported on a firm cement footing or level pad.
- A visual inspection of the outside tank, fuel fill gauge, regulator, pressure relief device, and shut off valve will be performed.
- Proper fuel piping from the tank to the appliance will be inspected.
- If the appliance is listed for gas service, the listing label must be visible on the unit with clearance to all combustibles per the listing of the unit. This includes fire place installations.
- The emergency shut off switch must be installed as required and clearly marked.
- The blue emergency shut off valves for the technician to service the appliance must be located within six feet of the appliance.
- There must be proper flue gas venting of the appliance. The flue vent will be designed for the particular unit involved. No

propane gases are allowed to vent the same flue as a solid fuel burning device.

- All direct venting appliances must be properly vented to the outside with relation to ground level and proper distances from windows, doors, and mechanical devices which draw air into the building. A diagram is attached.
- All primary safety controls must be installed per the product listing in place.

✓ **Solid Fuel Burning Devices** – All solid fuel burning devices will be inspected based on NFPA 211.

- The appliance should be listed for solid fuel use. This includes wood, wood pellets, and corn stoves. Any brochure and installation guidelines shall be provided by the Homeowner upon request.
- Clearances from combustibles per the product listing with appropriate heat shields as required will be inspected.
- Floor protection under the unit as required will be inspected.
- Proper chimney vent connector, clearance from combustibles 18” unless otherwise listed will be inspected and the unit should be free from rust and corrosion.
- The appliance must be properly connected to the appropriate chimney, masonry or manufactured chimney.
- There must be proper clearance around the chimney for combustibles. 2” clearance is required around masonry chimneys and per product listing for manufactured chimneys. Chimneys fire stopped between floor levels with non-combustible fire stopping material.
- The chimney should be cleaned as needed or on an annual basis and free from creosote build up.

General Housekeeping – A common sense approach to a safe rental property.

- Keep critical areas free of combustible materials and obstructions. Areas include woodstove spaces, heating devices, oil tanks, electrical panels, and similar areas. Keeping these areas clear also enables service personnel access for repairs.
- Keep exit passages free of obstructions including furniture, bikes, decorations, etc.
- Provide the renter with important information such as contact telephone numbers to eliminate confusion when a problem occurs.

- Make sure that the renter has clear directions to the property which renters can relay to the Dispatch Center in the event of an emergency.
- Place appropriate signage with the 911 address clearly visible to direct responders to the property.